

St Marina and Satan: A Syriac dialogue poem

[Santa Marina y Satán: un poema siríaco en forma de diálogo]

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Resumen: Los autores siríacos asumieron y adaptaron el antiguo género mesopotámico de la disputa por la prioridad, transformándolo en una disputa o diálogo con trasfondos teológicos que se encuentran normalmente entre los personajes bíblicos. Un pequeño número de estos poemas dialógicos se ocupan de santos más que de personajes bíblicos y es uno de éstos, cuyos protagonistas son Santa Marina y Satán, el que volvemos a publicar aquí en edición crítica, junto con tres *soghyatha* que se ocupan de la vida de Santa Marina. Todos proceden del Oficio maronita para la conmemoración de Santa Marina (17 de julio).

Abstract: Syriac authors took over and adapted the ancient Mesopotamian genre of precedence dispute, transforming it into a dispute or dialogue, with theological overtones, which is normally between biblical characters. A small number of these dialogue poems concern saints, rather than biblical characters, and it is one of these, where the protagonists are St Marina and Satan, which is re-published here in a critical edition, together with three *soghyatha* which concern the life of St Marina. All are taken from the Maronite Office for the Commemoration of St Marina (July 17th).

Palabras Clave: Siríaco. Marina. Satán. Maronita. Poemas dialógicos. *Soghyatha*.

Key Words: Syriac. Marina. Satan. Maronite. Dialogue poems. *Soghyatha*.



Ephrem appears to be the earliest Syriac author to take over into Syriac the ancient Mesopotamian literary genre of the precedence dispute,¹ when he

¹ On this subject see R. MURRAY, "Aramaic and Syriac dispute poems and their connections", in M.J. GELLER, J.C. GREENFIELD and M.P. WEITZMAN (eds.), *Studia Aramaica*, «Journal of Semitic Studies, Supplement» 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 157-187, and my "The Dispute Poem: from Sumer to Syriac", *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 1 (2001), pp. 3-10 (originally published in *Bayn al-Nahrain* 7/28 (1979), pp. 417-426). For the wider context, see G.J. REININK and H.L.J. VANSTIPHOUT (eds.), *Dispute Poems and Dialogues in the Ancient and Medieval Near East*, «Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta» 42 (Leuven: Peeters, 1991).

provided a series of three *madrashē* (*Carmina Nisibena* 52-54) in which Satan and Death dispute, in short alternating stanzas, over which of the two has the greater influence and power over human beings. The genre was further adapted by later Syriac writers (almost all of whom are anonymous) over the course of the fifth century and later: for the most the precedence dispute was transformed into an argument, normally with strong theological overtones, between two biblical characters.² These dialogue *soghyatha* eventually came to be regularly used in the Night Office (*Lelya/Lilyo*) at specific periods in the liturgical year, notable that of *Suboro* (Annunciation) - Nativity and during Holy Week. Although the great majority of surviving dialogue *soghyatha* concern biblical characters, there is a small number where the characters are personifications (such as Body and Soul) or where one of them is a saint. Belonging to this latter category are dialogues between Elijah of Hirta and an angel, between Helena and the Jews, between Behnam and Satan. and the poem published below, between Marina and Satan. The text is to be found at the end of the *Lilyo* in the Maronite Office for the Feast of St Marina (17th July), no doubt written specifically for use at the shrine of St Marina at Qalamun, near Tripoli (north Lebanon).

The Life of St Marina survives in many different forms and in many different languages;³ belonging, as it does, to a group of a dozen or so lives of transvestite saints, it has received a certain amount of attention in recent

² A bibliographical guide to the surviving dialogue *soghyatha* can be found in the appendix to my *Mary and Joseph, and other Syriac Dialogue Poems* (Piscataway NJ: Gorgias Press, forthcoming), and in 'Dialogue and other *sughyotho*', forthcoming in the Festschrift for Louis HAGE (Kaslik). An earlier list is given in REININK and VANSTIPHOUT, *Dispute Poems*, pp. 109-119.

³ The oldest form of the Greek Life (where she is Mary, not Marina) was edited by M. RICHARD, "La vie ancienne de sainte Marie surnommée Marinos", in *Corona Gratiarum. Miscellanea ... E. Dekkers OSB oblata*, I, «Instrumenta Patristica» 10 (Brugge/s'Gravenage: Sint Pietersabdij/Nijhoff, 1975), pp. 83-115 (reprinted in his *Opera Omnia* III [Turnhout: Brepols, 1977], no. 67), and is translated by N. COSTAS in A.-M. TALBOT (ed.), *Holy Women of Byzantium* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1996), pp. 1-12. Two different forms of her Life are known in Syriac, the earlier (where she is 'Mary') in A.S. LEWIS, *Select Narratives of Holy Women*, «Studia Sinaitica» IX [text] – X [tr.] (London: C.J. Clay and Sons, 1900), pp. 48*-61* (text), 36-45 (tr.); and a later one in the *Paradise of the Fathers*, ed. P. BEDJAN, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* VII (Paris/Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1897), pp. 272-277 (also in I, pp. 366-371). For other versions, see L. CLUGNET, *Vie et Office de Sainte Marine*, «Bibliothèque hagiographique orientale» 8 (Paris, 1905), xxxiii-xl (the volume is for the most part based on articles in *Revue de l'orient chrétien* 1901-1903). See also J.M. SAUGET in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* 8 (Rome: Ist. Giovanni XXIII, 1966), pp. 1166-1170. It might be mentioned that there is even a Muslim adaptation of the story, discovered by G. LEVI DELLA VIDA, "Una versione islamica della leggenda di santa Marina", *Rivista degli Studi Orientali* 36 (1961), pp. 271-297 (cp 37 [1962] pp. 257-261); here, according to one manuscript, the child turns out to be the future Bahira, the teacher of Muhammad!

years.⁴ For the present purposes, however, a brief outline of the narrative will suffice in order to provide a broader context for the dialogue *soghitha*.

On his wife's death, Marina's father decides to become a monk, with the (presumed) intention of leaving the young Marina with relatives. Marina, however, does not want to be separated from him, and eventually she persuades her father to let her go with him, dressed as a boy (named Marinus), to join the monastery. They are both accepted as monks, and Marina's holy way of life impresses everyone. One day Marinus is sent out on an errand and has to stay the night at an inn owned by a benefactor of the monastery. About that time the innkeeper's daughter is seduced by a young lover, and when she becomes pregnant the two of them accuse Marinus of having raped the girl. The girl's father bitterly complains to the abbot who agrees to expel Marinus. Marinus does not utter a single word in self-defence, but takes up her abode, nursing the child once it is born, outside the monastery gate for a number of years. Eventually her patience is rewarded and she/he is re-admitted, but it is only after her death that her true identity is revealed.

The dramatic setting of the dispute between Marina and Satan is evidently the moment when Marina is on the point of being driven out of the monastery, falsely accused of fathering a child both by the girl's parents (represented here symbolically by those who live in the 'Sown') and by the abbot and her fellow monks (represented by the 'Desert'): to save herself at this point by revealing that she was really a woman would have been the easy way out, and this is the path that Satan tries to persuade her to take. Marina, however, wishing to be true to her monastic vocation (albeit at the risk of expulsion from the monastery), follows the example of other holy people falsely accused of fathering a child and decides to remain silent before the accusation, and to allow justice take its own time to vindicate her. To have followed Satan's advice would have been to call into question her previous life as a monk living in the monastery,⁵ whither she had followed her father - something that had only been possible thanks to her being disguised as a young man.

Part of the inspiration for the present poem may well have come from the *soghitha* on Satan and the Sinful Woman (of Luke 7),⁶ even though there appear to be no clear verbal reminiscences. Both poems present a psychological conflict in the minds of the two women about what action to take at a

⁴ See especially E. PATLAGEAN, "L'histoire de la femme déguisée en moine et l'évolution de la sainteté féminine à Byzance", *Studi Medievali* III.17 (1976), pp. 597-623; also COSTAS' introduction to his translation of the Life, and S.J. DAVIES, "Crossed texts, crossed sex: intertextuality and gender in early Christian legends of Holy Women disguised as men", *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002), pp. 1-36, where further literature is cited.

⁵ She alludes to this in her stanza 7.

⁶ Published, with English translation, in OC 72 (1988), pp. 21-54. It features, for Thursday in Holy Week ('Thursday of the Mysteries'), in a considerable number of manuscripts.

momentous point in their lives: in both cases Satan represents the easier, and on the surface, more rational course of action - but it is essentially a cowardly one without any spiritual benefit, in that it avoids having to rely solely on placing all one's hope in God, and this is precisely the risk that both women bravely decide to take.

The anonymous poet portrays Satan as starting out with friendly advice (stanza 2ff), then moving on, when his advice falls on deaf ears, to warnings (stanza 10ff); when these too have no effect, he resorts to scathing sarcasm (stanza 18), showing himself to be a true male chauvinist (stanza 20), and becoming openly rude (stanza 22). Dire threats in due course follow (stanza 29), but when these too fail in their purpose, he reverts to repeating his original advice. Finally, in exasperation, he attributes Marina's stubbornness to female pride, but warns that this always quickly proves baseless and ends up with tears.

In reply to this last charge, Marina agrees that women *do* have pride, but it is the right sort of pride – in trampling on Satan's own pride, but at the same time showing humility before God. Throughout her replies it is her 'hope' in God to which she repeatedly comes back (stanzas 5, 11, 15, 27, 30). It is women as well as men who have emerged victorious from trials (stanza 5), and they serve as her models. Hinting at the unjust way in which sanctity was generally seen in society as a largely male prerogative, and, at the same time, pointing indirectly to the reasons why she had to resort to unconventional action in order to take up her own legitimate vocation, she tells Satan how she had 'greatly toiled ... so as to be numbered among males, in order to steal righteousness from them' (stanza 7).⁷ When Satan eventually threatens 'cruel crosses', her reply indicates that at the root of her stance against Satan is her desire to be held worthy of imitating the sufferings of Christ himself (stanza 36).

The author of this striking dialogue poem (in all likelihood a man) has brought out with considerable success a number of the subversive tensions and ironies, inherent in the story of Marina,⁸ which challenged conventional attitudes to female sanctity.

* * *

⁷ In a similar way Jacob of Serugh (and Jewish tradition before him) justifies Tamar's highly unconventional way of becoming an ancestor of the Messiah, when what should have been the normal way by which this would come about (through levirate marriage) had been unjustly withheld from her (Jacob's verse homily is edited with an English translation in *Le Muséon* 115 [2002], pp. 279-315).

⁸ These are brought out by Costas in the introduction to his translation; see espec. p.3, where he writes 'In this vertiginous conquest of manhood by woman, Mary/Marinos is a hero of virile temperament, and at the same time is a hero who suffers, voluntarily accepting marginalization, victimization and helplessness. Ironically, her exploits suggest that the feminine element is part of the ambivalence of virile strength, and that it may serve to balance and amplify that strength, as well as subvert its authoritative claims to dominance and hegemony'.

As is often the case in the Syriac dispute poems, there is a double alphabetic acrostic. Instead, however, of beginning the acrostic with the dialogue (as is the case with the earliest dialogue poems), the acrostic commences straight away, in stanza 1. The introduction, giving the setting of the poem, is very brief, confined to the first stanza. Satan is the opening speaker, but since this is in the second stanza of *alaph* in the acrostic, this means that Marina is the opening speaker for each following pair of letters in the acrostic. This pattern would have ended up with Satan as the last speaker, but in order to avoid this the author has given Satan two consecutive stanzas (nos. 28-29), a little over half way through the poem.

The metre is the normal one to be found in the dialogue *soghyatha*, namely stanzas consisting of 7+7 7+7 syllables.

The dialogue poem is incorporated into the Maronite Office of St Marina, which was published, without translation, by L. Clugnet in *Revue de l'orient chrétien* 9 (1904), pp.244-260, 409-441. It features at the end of *Lilyo* (pp.419-422), and is described as a *madrasha*, rather than a *soghitha*; this will be because of the metre, seeing that a different one (8+8 8+8) is the norm for *soghyatha* in the Maronite tradition. The Syriac text was derived from a manuscript provided for Clugnet by a Maronite priest, Pierre Hobeika (= H). This manuscript is manifestly corrupt in a number of places; furthermore, in the case of the present dialogue poem, gaps in the alphabetic acrostic indicate that three stanzas have been entirely lost. Fortunately two further manuscripts of the Office of St Marina survive, both of the seventeenth century, and with the help of these, the full text of the poem can now be given.⁹

The two manuscripts in question are:

Cannoubine (Qanubin) ms 25, pp.137-209, of the 17th century (= C).¹⁰

This manuscript is rather closely related to H, though it sometimes has a better text (e.g. it provides the second stanza of *nun* (st. 28), which has been lost in H). Conceivably H could have been copied from C.

Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, ms 77, ff.254r-296r, dated 1694 (= K).¹¹

⁹ I am most grateful to Soeur Clémence HÉLOU for supplying me with photocopies of the two manuscripts in connection with a projected volume on St Marina, edited by her: this is planned to include an English translation of the whole Office (thus including the poems re-edited here).

¹⁰ Described in F. BAISSARI, *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de Cannoubine*, «Publications de l'Institut de Liturgie à l'Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik» 28 (Kaslik: Université Saint-Esprit, 2001), pp. 83-84.

¹¹ It was this manuscript that E. KHALIFÉ-HACHEM used in his "Office Maronite du grand dimanche de la Résurrection", *Parole de l'Orient* 6/7 (1975/6), pp. 281-308; he describes the contents of the manuscript on pp. 287-288.

In the edition I have kept the late orthography of the three manuscripts (e.g. stanza 43, **كحلل**). Sometimes a later spelling is only found in C and H, e.g. stanza 20: **ك** K] **كك** C H; such cases are not, however, listed among the variants in the apparatus. The spelling of the feminine singular participles varies between full and abbreviated forms, depending on the requirements of the metre: thus in stanza 38ab we have:

¹² There are a number of other misprints or corruptions in the printed text which I have tacitly corrected.

[illegible]

- [illegible]

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31	ܘܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܠܥܡܪ ܗܝ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
32	ܘܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
33	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
34	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
35	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
36	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
37	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
38	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
39	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
40	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
41	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
42	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
43	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ
44	ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܗܝ ܗܠ ܕܥܣܝܐ ܕܥܡܪ ܠܗ ܕܥܣܝܐ

Apparatus

Readings to the left of the bracket are those of K, unless otherwise stated.

<i>qala</i> title:	ܩܠܐ] <i>om</i> C; ܩܠܐܢܗܐ H
stanza 5b	ܩܠܐ ܠܡܫܝܚ] <i>tp</i> C H
5d	ܩܠܐܢܗܐ ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ C H
10c	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐ C H
11c	ܩ] <i>om</i> H
	ܩܠܐ] + ܩܠܐ H
15c	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ H
15d	ܩܠܐܢܗܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ C H
16c	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ C H
17b	ܩܠܐ] <i>om lamadh</i> C; ܩܠܐ H
17d	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐ H
23-24	<i>om</i> C H
25a	ܩܠܐ (ipf)] ܩܠܐ C H
25d	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐ H
28	<i>om</i> H
30c	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ H
30d	ܩܠܐܢܗܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ C H
31d	ܩܠܐܢܗܐ] <i>tp</i> C H
34d	ܩܠܐܢܗܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ C H
35d	ܩܠܐ] <i>pr waw</i> H
37b	ܩܠܐ] <i>om syame</i> C H
37c	ܩܠܐ C H] ܩܠܐ K
38a	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐ C H
38b	ܩܠܐ] <i>om syame</i> H
38d	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ H
39c	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ H
	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ C H
44d	ܩܠܐ] ܩܠܐܢܗܐ C H

Translation:

(In the following translation I have added a few words here and there in order to bring out the sense).

To the melody ‘Praise to you, Lord; you do they (f.pl.) worship’.

1. *alaph* O discerning listeners, come and listen to the dispute
between Marina and Satan, and sing praise to the Lord of all.

2. *alaph* SATAN The Evil One said to Marina, the dearly beloved virgin,
‘Desert and Sown, in their envy, have spoken falsehood against you’.
3. *beth* MARINA ‘Every word Desert and Sown have spoken against me is in
falsehood:
in the name of the Lord do I put my hope to escape victorious from
them’.
4. *beth* SATAN ‘In the name of the Lord you shall escape if you pay attention
and listen to me, my daughter:
reveal your identity, that you are a woman, and you will escape from all
guile’.
5. *gamal* MARINA ‘Those men and women who have emerged victorious
first entered into trials and were rescued
by the hope they held in the name of the Lord - and like them I too have
hope’.
6. *gamal* SATAN ‘I have revealed and shown you the right path by which
you shall be victorious, but you won’t listen;
I am greatly upset in my concern for you, and my pain won’t go away
since you won’t listen to me’.
7. *dalath* MARINA ‘My skin cleaves to my bones [Lam.4:8]: I have greatly
toiled in my labours
so as to be numbered among males in order to steal righteousness from
them’.
8. *dalath* SATAN ‘If you wish to be numbered among males, listen to what I
have to say to you:
go and reveal your identity, how you are a woman, and then go and live
in the world along with men’.
9. *he* MARINA ‘What you have to say is miles away from what I have in
mind:
my desire is to die in the wild – and I shall not do what you have said’.
10. *he* SATAN ‘This wild place shall be your tomb and you will not get
away from trials,
for if you don’t listen to my words, you will die and perish, with your
hope cut off’.

11. *waw* MARINA 'Great woe is reserved for you and for whoever listens to
any of your words.
There is hope in God, and those who hope in him are not ashamed'. [Ps
25:3]
12. *waw* SATAN 'It is a double woe that you will have if you fail to listen to
any of my words:
you will die in the wilderness and wild beasts and birds of prey will
devour you'.
13. *zayin* MARINA 'I will sing praise while I live, [Ps 146:2] while I have a
place where to sing;
and whether I live or whether I die, it is to the Lord I belong all the time'.
14. *zayin* SATAN 'Sing on then, and don't stop – for in a little while your
song will come to an end;
you will go down to Sheol without hope and your lot will be a double
woe'. [cp Ps 31:18, 55:16]
15. *heṯh* MARINA 'The Lord is living and holy is his name, and whoever
hopes in him will not be ashamed: [Ps 25:3]
from this monastery I will not depart. and will not go away from its
gate'.
16. *heṯh* SATAN 'Savage animals are roaring, eager to rip you apart, and
vultures too;
if you don't carry out my advice they will tear you apart and drink up
your blood'.
17. *teth* MARINA 'A great blessing will be mine if they tear my body apart
and drink up my blood,
for my Lord is the Lord of all: he will not do what you have said'.
18. *teth* SATAN 'So torture you consider a blessing? What then do you think
of eternal woe?
Flee from the error in your mind; follow my advice and live'.
19. *yodh* MARINA 'Let the sea and land testify concerning me, the heavens
too, and all that is in them, [cp Deut 4:26, 31:28]

that I renounce you and your words: cursed is your counsel, and
accursed your name’.

20. *yodh* SATAN ‘I know that women don’t have much intelligence or brain,
for they don’t know what they are saying, and they do what is harmful
to themselves’.

21. *kaph* MARINA ‘All the advice that you give is bad; your words are bad
too – because you are bad:
as our Lord said in his Gospel, “a tree that is bad bears bad fruit”. [Matt
7:17]

22. *kaph* SATAN ‘Check your words, stupid woman, and shut up: you don’t
realize it is your duty to save yourself,
as far as you are able, and live a normal life, and not perish’.

23. *lamadh* MARINA A ‘Accursed are your words, Satan, and accursed is
the instruction which you teach.
for your mouth is full of cursing and wickedness, and on your tongue are
fraud and deceit’.

24. *lamadh* SATAN ‘You haven’t read or learnt the Scripture; you are
ignorant and you don’t listen.
My words and utterance are full of truth, and deceit is far from my
heart’.

25. *mim* MARINA ‘If I listen to you I will indeed perish, for you have set a
trap that leads to perdition,
and I won’t be able to save myself if I listen to you and your counsel’.

26. *mim* SATAN ‘My advice is crystal clear, its light is illumined by the sun,
but because the light of your mind is darkened you don’t see the light
even when it shines out’.

27. *nun* MARINA ‘Take a rest from laying your traps, for I shall break them
all up:
I place my hope in Jesus’ name and no harm will come to me’.

28. *nun* SATAN ‘You should give a rest to your words: that I should rest is
not my wish.
It is a great sin that you commit if you remain in this wild place.

29. *semkath* SATAN 'You will do yourself harm at the hands of marauding robbers:
if they realize you are a woman I don't know what they will do to you!'.
30. *semkath* MARINA 'The hope that I've placed in God will rescue me and
I will not be harmed;
he is the hope of the poor and the orphans, and to all who hope on him'.
31. 'e SATAN 'Escape from all sorts of harm while you still have a chance
to escape:
don't put the Lord, your Lord, to the test, hoping he will perform a
miracle with you'.
32. 'e MARINA 'It is from you that I will make my escape and I won't touch
your words of advice;
if I escape from you and your words, then will I be accounted blessed!'.
33. *pe* SATAN Satan replied and said 'If you reveal that you are a woman
all the abuse you are getting will go away and then you can sing praise
and rejoice'.
34. *pe* MARINA 'I will not give you any answer for all your talk is
importunate:
all that you say is false. You give a lot of advice, but you are the one who
needs it'.
35. *ṣadhe* SATAN 'Cruel crosses are set up in readiness for you on every
side:
summer is preparing burning heat for you, and winter, snow and ice'.
36. *ṣadhe* MARINA 'Our Saviour endured the Cross because of our human
race,
and if he holds me worthy to endure it, then this will be a great blessing
for me'.
37. *qoph* SATAN 'Get up and prepare yourself to receive crosses, sufferings
and torments
which evil people, and the monks, will bring upon you - just as you are
wanting!'.
38. *qoph* MARINA 'I will not give you any answer for all your talk is
importunate:
all that you say is false. You give a lot of advice, but you are the one who
needs it'.

38. *qoph* MARINA 'I have already received these from you, and I will do so in future for I am ready for suffering: whether from you, O Evil One, or from human beings, from wild animals, or from reptiles'.
39. *resh* SATAN 'It is pride that women love, and boasting is in their heart, but in a little while they grow weak and are defeated: then tears start coming, flowing from their eyes!'.
40. *resh* MARINA 'Yes, women love pride - as you have said in your pride; but they are humble before their Lord, while it is you and your pride they will trample down'.
41. *shin* Give peace to your Church and her children with that peace that pacifies all; rebuke the Evil One and his band: let them be scattered like smoke! [cp Ps 37:20]
42. *shin* Let peace reign in the midst of your Church; let fights and schisms be brought to an end: may they be brought under your yoke and do service before you.
43. *tau* May your handmaid enter her monastery and in the Holy of Holies offer up to you a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving - and may both Desert and Sown be joined in peace.
44. *tau* May my supplication enter and be accepted in the presence of your divine tribunal; may the Evil One and his band feel shame, and may the Church be radiant in giving praise!.

Main variants:

The reading to the left of the bracket is that of K, unless otherwise stated.

Melody title:¹³ you do they worship] *om* C; for at your coming H stanza 15c depart] be separated H

15d not] never C H

17 he will not do it] I will not do it H

¹³ For the differing *qala* titles, see L. HAGE, *La Musique Maronite* VI, «Bibliothèque de l'Université de Kaslik» XLIII (Kaslik: Université Saint-Esprit, 2001), pp. 231-232.

- 23-24 *om* C H
 25d your counsel] your words H
 28 *om* H
 30c of the poor] who looks for H
 34d you are the one who needs it] you do not act yourself C H¹⁴
 37c evil C H] and women K¹⁵
 38a from you] crosses C H
 38d or from reptiles] and I will put (them) to flight H
 44d praise] you praise C H.

APPENDIX: Three *soghyatha* on Marina

The Office of St Marina contains several further verse texts with alphabetic acrostics, three of which specifically deal with episodes in her life.¹⁶ It is these three that are edited below, again using K as the basis for the text. It is of interest to note that some of these, and other texts in the Office, concern features only to be found in the first of the two Syriac Lives, despite the fact that this Life locates Marina (or rather, Maria, as she is called there) in Bithynia (the second Life has no geographical indications at all). It thus seems likely that the various texts in the Maronite Office are dependent on a different recension of the Life, not hitherto known. Support for this also comes from the name Abraham, given to Marina's father: in both of the two Syriac Lives he is left unnamed.¹⁷

1. *Ramsho*, *Soghitha* (H, pp. 250-251; C, pp. 146-148; K, f. 259r-v).

This *soghitha* is concerned with the moment when the pregnant girl's father goes off to the monastery to complain to the abbot, accusing Marinus of being the cause of his daughter's pregnancy. The metre is 8+8 syllables (the norm for *soghyatha* in the Maronite tradition).¹⁸

ܠܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܠܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܠܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܠܡܢ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ
ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ	ܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ ܕܡܪܝܢܐ

¹⁴ Here, as elsewhere, C and H alter the text to remove what at first seems a difficulty in K's text.

¹⁵ K's reading is definitely secondary here, since 'women', which would have been suitable after *gabre*, is out of place after *nasha*.

¹⁶ Two of the others are verse *Sedre* (one for *Sutoro*, the other for *Lilyo*), while a third immediately precedes the dialogue poem.

¹⁷ In Greek he is sometimes given the name Eugenios.

¹⁸ M. BREYDY, *Kult, Dichtung und Musik bei den Syro-Maroniten*, III (Kobayath, 1979), p. 239.

[illegible]

stanza zayin מִן הָאֵלֶּיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֵלֶיךָ הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה CH

stanza *heth* ಕ್ರೂರ ಅಂ] ಮಲ ಕುಕ CH
$$\text{KOH} \quad \text{K}_2\text{O} \quad \text{K}_2\text{O} \quad \text{CH}$$
stanza *teth* and *mim* ಉಚಿತ CH] ಉಚಿತ K[illegible]stanza *nun*, [אחריהם ואלוהים] CHstanza *semkath* [] C Hstanza *sadhe* CHstanza *qoph* አፈላፊ አፈላፊ ለሆነው ለሆነው] አፈላፊ ለሆነው ለሆነው ለሆነው CHstanza *rish* ကိယံ] သိယံ C H

Translation:

[*alaph*] May I tell now, if I am capable,
the wondrous tale of St Marina.

[*beth*] In the village of Qilamun was she born
but her abode was in Qinnubin.¹⁹

[*gamal*] God chose her from her mother's womb
and placed her as a light upon a candelabra.

[*dalath*] The dawning of her light blinded the eyes
of all the envious – and they hated her to no purpose.

[*he*] Satan wishes to put out
her beautiful light and to mock at her,

¹⁹ The name Qanubin = *koinobion* provides a link with the first Syriac Life, where it is a *koinobion* to which father and daughter go. Qilamun = Qalamun.

- [*waw*] and he entered a girl and a certain young man,
and they met one another and committed a crime.
- [*zayin*] They sowed tares, maligning Marina
as they uttered falsehoods concerning her.
- [*ḥeth*] The father of the ravished girl,
full of fury, set off for the monastery.
- [*teth*] ‘Marinus has abused my daughter’, he said
in the presence of the abbot, ‘and he has corrupted her beauty.
- [*yodh*] ‘You have given evil in return for all the good
that I have done to you, O monks.
- [*kaph*] ‘So many good deeds have I performed for you,
but me you have repaid me with this outrage.
- [*lamadh*] ‘I wish I had already died
and never seen this day, so full of grief’.
- [*mim*] ‘When Marinus has returned’,
the abbot replied, ‘I will not receive him back.
- [*nun*] ‘Let him come now, and I’ll drive him out:
I’m not going to accept him any longer.
- [*semkath*] ‘He has performed an outrage, so let him go off
and live in the company of those who commit outrage’.
- [*‘e*] As for Marina, she completed her task
and returned to the monastery - but they did not accept her there.
- [*pe*] The gatekeeper encountered Marina
and prevented her from entering the monastery.
- [*ṣadhe*] She fasted and she prayed for four years,²⁰
as she stood weeping at the gate.
- [*qoph*] Cold, hail, ice, snow
and bitter freezing did she put up with and endure.²¹
- [*resh*] Height and depth wondered in amazement
– and gave praise to the Lord in whom her hope was placed.
- [*shin*] Heaven and earth gave glory
to Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- [*tau*] O Trinity by whom she was strengthened,
take pity on the Church and have mercy on her.

stanza *nun* I’m not going to accept him] he will not dwell with us C H

²⁰ This is the figure given in the second Syriac Life (ed. P. BEDJAN, I, p. 370 = VII, p. 276); the first Life gives the period as three years. The gatekeeper features in both Lives.

²¹ The cold is only mentioned in the first Life (ed. A.S. LEWIS, p. 56* [text], p. 41 [tr.]).

2. *Lilyo. Soghitha* (H, pp. 413-414; C, pp. 170-171; K, ff. 272r-273r).

[illegible]

stanza *adhes* 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣, CH (𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣) 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 𐎠𐎡𐎢𐎣 K

[*alaph*] Let me tell now, if I am capable,
the tale of St Marina.

[<i>beth</i>]	In the days of the kings of the Christians was this virgin resplendent.
[<i>gamal</i>]	God chose her from her mother's womb and from her youth she abandoned the world,
[<i>dalath</i>]	for she judged in herself that, from her youth, she should take up the yoke [Mt. 11:29] of the Sovereign Christ. ²²
[<i>he</i>]	Accompanying her was the Holy Spirit, as well as the father of this virgin.
[<i>waw</i>]	She arose of a sudden and tonsured her head during the night, lest anyone see her.
[<i>zayin</i>]	She prepared herself and put on men's clothing, ²³ and set off for the midst of Qanubin.
[<i>heth</i>]	The abbot saw her: she stood before him and he blessed her, receiving her into the house of the brethren.
[<i>teth</i>]	The Good One gave her strength and might, and she grew strong and increased in righteousness.
[<i>yodh</i>]	She increased greatly in righteousness, and because of this the Evil One was envious of her.
[<i>kaph</i>]	He laid an ambush for her, setting a trap, but she broke it and escaped unharmed.
[<i>lamadh</i>]	The fearsome troops that the Sovereign of Errors arrayed against her failed to frighten her.
[<i>mim</i>]	The Sovereign Christ scattered them as he strengthened and confirmed this virgin.
[<i>nun</i>]	Mercy came down from on high and stirred in the heart of the abbot and the dear brethren.
[<i>semkath</i>]	She endured and bore the afflictions of the times and the abuse of the peoples, and she did not complain.
[<i>'e</i>]	He who examines the heart and the inmost parts [Ps. 7:9] answered her request, having seen her humility.
[<i>pe</i>]	The pure censer of her prayers wafted up before the Lord, and he was pleased with her.
[<i>ṣadhe</i>]	May her prayer be a wall of compassion

²² The term *malka mshiḥa*, characteristic of the Palestinian Targum tradition, occurs in the Peshitta at I Chron. 5:2; for its use in Syriac literature, see my chapter "Syria and Mesopotamia: The shared term *malka mshiḥa*, in M. BOCKMUEHL and J. Carleton PAGET (eds.), *Redemption and Resistance: the Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), pp. 171-182. It is not uncommon in later liturgical texts.

²³ Reference to tonsuring (but with a different verb, *gaz*) and male clothing is found in the first Syriac Life, but not in the second.

stanza *kaph* ܬܠܐ ܬܠܐ ܬܠܐ C H
 stanza *lamadh* ܠܡܕܐ ܠܡܕܐ C H K (erroneously)
 stanza *nun* lost in H
 stanza *pe* ܡܥܬܐ ܡܥܬܐ C H

Translation:

- [*alaph*] O tongue of mine, see that you are not silent,
 but tell, as far as you are able,
 [*beth*] of St Marina, who from her youth
 took up the yoke [Mt. 11:29] upon her shoulders.
 [*gamal*] Valiantly did she toil in the vineyard,
 taking her reward of the one denarius [Mt. 20:9-10].²⁴
 [*dalath*] You are that denarius, Lord, for apart from you
 there is no other denarius in the two worlds!
 [*he*] She had a father who became a monk,
 and she wanted to live with him in the monastery.
 [*waw*] He opposed her wish and declined
 to meet his daughter's request.
 [*zayin*] She overcame him with tears and lamentations:
 he granted her peace of mind and carried out her desire.
 [*het*] 'Look, my daughter, and see how, in the abode of monks
 there is nowhere for a single woman to live'.
 [*teth*] 'What you say is good: tonsure my head
 and clothe me in men's garments, father'.²⁵
 [*yodh*] 'O pure and hidden dove,
 accept a warning from my mouth'.²⁶
 [*kaph*] 'Keep back from your mouth women's talk,
 and act as a man in what you do.
 [*lamadh*] 'Do not tire in any way,
 but recognize that the Evil One is our enemy;
 [*mim*] 'he lays nets and snares all the time:
 even if he is worsted, he does not desist.
 [*nun*] He roars out [I Pet. 5:8] each day for our destruction,
 and for the righteous he lays traps.
 [*semkath*] 'He stirs up war and wages it with us;

²⁴ Matt. 20:9-10. This interpretation of the denarius is already found in Jacob of Serugh's Homily 14 (on the Workers in the Vineyard), ed. P. BEDJAN, I, p. 330.

²⁵ See above, note 23.

²⁶ Only in the first Syriac Life does her father give her a warning about how to behave in the monastery.

- he never slumbers or shows any pity’.
- [‘*e*] ‘We are the Lord’s sheep’, the girl replied,
‘and he will assist us.
- [*pe*] ‘The snare that Satan has laid for us,
Christ will shatter, and he will deliver us.
- [*ṣadhe*] ‘Only show your willing and take me with you;
I have hope that the Lord will assist me’.
- [*qoph*] Her father consented to her demand,
and they arose at night and set off on the journey.
- [*resh*] They travelled on the road that led to the desert,
they arrived at the monastery, and entered under its protection.
- [*shin*] Praise to the Father who directs the path
of those who seek the salvation of their souls.
- [*tau*] Thanksgiving to the Son and Holy Spirit
who thirst continually for our salvation.

stanza *dalath* in the two worlds] in the world to come C H

stanza *nun* (lost in H)

stanza *pe* and he will deliver us] and we shall be escapers C H.

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